

# Bard Equity and Inclusion Podcast

**00:00 Josh:** welcome everybody to the latest edition to our podcast series. I'm Josh Tyler, one of the assistant directors of admission. Today our podcast is going to focus on the office of equity and inclusion at Bard. And we have some wonderful representatives from that office, but I am also joined by my colleague, senior associate director of admission, Kate Hardy. Hi, Kate.

**00:20 Kate:** Hi Josh. Thanks for having me. That's fun to be here.

**00:25 Josh:** Yeah, and let's introduce our panel. And let's start with Claudette.

**00:29 Claudette:** Hi, everyone. This is Claudette from the office of equity and inclusion. And I've been at Bard for almost 4 years. And I use she/her/hers, I don't know if that's relevant in a podcast, but I'll say it anyways. Yup.

**00:43 Josh:** Absolutely, and Kim?

**00:45 Kim:** Hi everybody, my name is Kim Sargent from the office of equity and inclusion programs at Bard. I have also been at Bard for almost 4 years now as a staff member. And I am also a Bard alumna from the class of 2014. And lastly, I also use she/her/hers pronouns.

**1:06 Josh:** great. Thanks Kim. And yeah, I forgot to mention that I am also a former Bard student. And so is Kate. And Wailly? If you'd like to introduce yourself, that'd be great!

**1:17 Wailly:** Hey Everybody. My name is Wailly Compres. I am also somebody who graduated from Bard in 2018. But now I have been working in the office of equity and inclusion as an academic advisor since 2018, so almost 3 years.

**01:35 Josh:** great. Thank you all for being here! We really appreciate it. And just kind of in a general sense, can you tell us what the office of equity and inclusion does at Bard and really what its mission is?

**01:46 Wailly:** Does the director want to take that question?

**01:50 Claudette:** I am still stuck by the fact that I am the only non-Bardian in this room, you know? I am a bit alone.

**01:55 Kim:** Honorary alum, honorary Claudette. You've earned it.

**02:00 Claudette:** Okay. When it comes to the mission of the office, it's really creating a platform where our scholars can feel supported. And we really run with this idea of wholistic support, right, when it comes to support the students, it's not just academics but also personal and social. So, creating a space where they can feel like they can just be themselves fully. That's why we actually have Kappa house on campus, which is a house where students can just kind of come in and use the kitchen for cooking, use the living room for watching TV after hours with their friends. There's a study room and that's where we are, the folks here, Kim, Wailly, and I, that's where our office is located. So, the mission is really that – to bring students to Bard and to give them an opportunity to flourish by connecting them with all our resources and making sure that we are allowing them to see themselves as scholars. A lot of the times our students come from underprivileged background and a lot of the times our students are first generation college degree, so this is all new to them. So, our way to support them is to support them through that process. So yeah, it's really a commitment and a mission of equity, of inclusion, that's at the epitome of what we do. Those are the main things.

**03:14 Josh:** Thanks, Claudette. I'm actually curious as you mentioned the supports. Just what kind of support and more specific terms that are provided to the students during the admission, when they arrive at Bard, and then throughout their 4 years at Bard.

**03:26 Kim:** So, I can answer a little bit about the support that we provide throughout the admissions process for students. So, from the beginning, we don't really accept applications from early decision deadlines or immediate decision deadlines. We want our students to have as much time as possible to fill out the applications, so we mainly are looking at the January 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for anybody applying to our 4 scholarships. And then throughout the process, we make ourselves very available as students have questions about the application process, questions about what requirements we are looking for. We are also pretty regularly in touch with college counselors, high school counselors as well. And then, once students submit their applications, we have a variety of interview moments. Sometimes we do one-on-ones, we do group interviews depending on the scholarships as well. And once the student is accepted to our scholarship program, there's a lot of financial aid guidance that comes from that point on. A lot of hands-on experience to give them to Bard in a way that feels comfortable for them. We offer a lot of visits to campus and tours to campus and just really just trying to help a student to make sure that Bard is the right place for them, and our program is also the right place for them. So that's a little bit of our support that leads to the admission process before a student gets here.

**04:45 Kate:** I guess the one thing I can add is that the admission office works very closely with the equity and inclusion office on this process. So, it is important to know that we try to make sure that the students are not falling through the cracks of the admission process. And that if they are read as a good fit for the equity and inclusion programs, we really encourage students that are on our side to apply and fill out the supplemental forms and sort of direct them towards the equity and inclusion scholarship program as wonderful opportunities. And it is also important to know, contrary to some institutions out there, that applying to the equity and inclusion program doesn't inhibit you from being considered for other admission paths either. So, we think about the admission process sort of comprehensively. And I think that is important, sort of side note to all of the incredible work that the equity and inclusion office does, creating a really high-touch admissions process that is really about finding the students that are going to be the right fit for the Bard experience.

**05:51 Josh:** Kate, thank you for mentioning that! That actually, you know, I'd like to kind of jump ahead and come back to the supports that happen throughout the four years, because I think that is a nice segue into, you know, for student who doesn't appear to be financially eligible, or they are not eligible for the equity and inclusion program. What options are available for students? I know it is kind of a two-part question. But I am curious if you could speak to that.

**06:16 Kate:** Sure! I think it's important to know that Bard provides only need-based financial aids in general for a reason. That is about ultimately making the pathway in Annandale affordable for a really wide range of students, socioeconomically speaking. My family personally was eligible for the opportunity program when I applied to Bard, but I did not know that they existed, and so I didn't apply to Bard through that pathway. But I ended up being admitted to Bard with extremely generous financial aid that ended up making a financial aid possibility for my family. And so, there are other pathways to apply to Bard. I do like to put that out there (that this isn't). The equity and inclusion programs are incredible, but there are other scholarship opportunities and other need-based financial aid scholarship opportunities available, including a scholarship specifically for students and families who are new to this country called the new generation scholarship. Specific scholarships for specific academic programs in the sciences, economics, and classics, a presidential scholarship for economic achievement. But by far, the majority of students at Bard just received a general need-based Bard scholarship that is designed to meet the difference between

what your family can afford and what costs to go to Bard. So, the importance of not looking at the sticker price as something you will have to come up with but filling out something that we will work with you to make it affordable. And I think that is an important part of how we facilitate the process to the experience at Annandale and think about making the experience available more broadly. And there definitely are, I think, other support in place, but before I talk about any of the substance that happens within the Bard experience, I think it might be helpful, maybe Wailly you can speak to this. Helpful to hear about what happens when students arrive at Annandale and the particular support that are in place for the students in the equity and inclusion program. I am happy to sort of speak more broadly and Claudette can also chime in on what is outside the program as well. But maybe we can speak to that the support in place when students arrive.

**08:25 Wailly:** Yeah, Kate, one thing I want to mention: with all those other scholarships and other ways in which students can get financial aids support, there are certain communities that are formed at Bard that I also would like to mention and kind of honor a little bit. Like the first-generation students, they tend to create their own sort of like relationships and groups at Bard. And those groups then tend to be very close to the students that come in through our program. So eventually the dynamic that you get to see is that a lot of students who might not fall within our office end up creating communities and bonds with our students. And therefore, they get our support. So, I like to mention that a little bit, that, although some of the students that we really like in the admission process might not end up in our program, they do end up coming to the office and end up getting a lot of the support anyways. And in regard to the support that students get at the moment that the school year begins, Bard has a mandatory summer program that is called the Language and Thinking program. A lot of students applying might be familiar with this already. But the office of equity and inclusion also has this summer program that is mandatory to all of our applicants once they get accepted. This usually happens 4 weeks before the Language and Thinking program. You come in July and start working with us right away. And it's a 3-week program in which it is writing and math intensive. So, you're going to be doing some math and you're going to be doing some writing classes with some of our great professors who tend to support our program throughout the year. And basically, throughout that program, you not only end up taking classes, but you also are just forming very strong kind of communities already. The moment you start our summer program, through our workshops and through our classes and social programming as well, you kind of get to just create a very strong community with your cohort, so the students who are coming with you. You get to know the faculty members, staff members at Bard in the summer and those are people who become your future professors that you happen to know over the summer. They tend to be the people who eventually might be your future employer on campus as well. They really get to know you and get to be in touch with you a lot over the summer. Other things happen that in that summer program include the workshops that I've mentioned. We try to prepare students a lot on thinking about the noncognitive skills that might help them succeed at Bard. We have a program focuses on that specifically with STEM students. Over the summer, they do a lot of that with us as well. And lastly, I would like to mention just the interpersonal growth that happens within that process. A lot of what we've tried to do over the summer is to put students together in a room and start reflecting about their past experiences and kind of the things they have experienced before coming to Bard and how Bard can be a place where they can honor those experiences and start looking at those experiences in different ways that they can inform: maybe the thing they study, the project that they start, and club they might start with other students as well. But yeah, it's great stuff that happen over the summer and it's actually my favorite thing in this entire program. And I have done the program as a staff member and it's always an amazing time.

**12:07 Claudette:** I think additional to add to that is, for the summer program, it's residential. So, you have to come to campus, and you live in the dormitories already and you're getting to experience that. And one the important components of that is the fact that you begin to work really closely with some of our peer mentors. So, you really get to establish those relationships and kind of see. It actually reckons with the question that what is your relationship

with studying, what is your relationship with writing. And having those keen moments and actually having an in-house support system to help you with the homework or the tutoring. That's really a key to make sure students are starting to see themselves in the transition, you know to the semester. And then they are all right into the Language and Thinking. Yeah, I think that's something additional to that I wanted to make sure that is mentioned. And I think for us, we are able to capture a lot during the summer program, from what I know, that we've got much better at kind of like paying attention to all the things that are on our side. If students are struggling or having a specific need. And once the semester comes, we can definitely connect them to the resources a lot faster. We do have an opportunity to have them on the program. So that's great. Similar to Wiley, that's actually my favorite. That's one of the favorite things of what I do.

**13:24 Josh:** Thanks, Claudette and Wailly. I am curious about how your office continues to work with students beyond that first year and the initial process during the summer, in the application process and just over what happens during the course of the next few years. How do they stay apart from the equity and inclusion cohort students?

**13:45 Kim:** I can speak to that a little bit. And pretty much everything that Claudette and Wailly mentioned, that takes place in the summer. We try to continue all of those initiatives throughout the school year. And we just add a few things along the way. But the peer mentor program continues to grow throughout the school year. Every first-year student in our office is matched with an upper classman peer mentor. The workshops continue throughout the school year. There's a first-year series of workshops that we call mentor network. It's run by peer mentors and staff, just discussing a variety of topics that have to deal with the transition to college. There are also workshops for the entire OEI community, the office of equity and inclusion community, so we might have a big event that might relate to more than just first years. It might be about looking for jobs; it might be about picking your major, picking classes. We have social events that continue as well; and we have staff and students that help us plan those. One that we have coming up now is a Friendsgiving this week. Let's see what else. Yeah so, I supervised the peer mentors, we have 12 of them. And they work with our first-year students, like I mentioned, programming, workshops mentors. And yeah, just throughout the entire time that one of our scholars are at Bard, they meet with one of our staff members as well for advising, either weekly, biweekly, monthly.

**15:06 Kate:** Sorry to interrupt, something that always stands out to me just as an outsider looking in sometimes. Although I know I am always welcome and that's one of the amazing things about the equity and inclusion office. I also just feel like we are all sort of just outsiders looking in right now at this weird COVID moment that we are all living through. Especially as someone who works regionally for Bard, like I am more distant from I've ever been from the community. I love what I love about all of the work that you do, putting the word out there into the community over social media and the emails about the amazing events that happen even in virtual spaces, around career development, mental health support, cultivating community with the equity and inclusion alumni community. That's really what stands out to me and I don't know if Claudette and Wailly... Claudette I know you were going to speak to something else too, but I love to hear you talk about those events because they stand out as really special and it's totally inclusive to anyone that wants to be a part of them too.

**16:13 Wailly:** Yeah, we just hosted an alumni event in the past month in October. I think it was the last week of October, the Family & Alumni weekend, and that was such a beautiful event. It was a little bit intimidating because we've never done that event virtually, it always happened on campus. We usually have 8-10 alumni come back to interact with the community and they get a full day with us. They get to tour the campus and they get to see all the changes and hear all the updates of the office. And this year, we tried to replicate that. And actually, I don't think we were expecting as much for everybody to come in and they did. We created one hour for students to come in and for

alumni to talk a little bit and just to hang out. And they all came to that hour and to that little time just to be in the community because they miss it right? There were so much that happened at the Kappa house and so many experiences that are kind of touching and they stayed with you forever. And you kind of just want to go back in, have a moment, and where you get to experience that, even if it's just virtually. And one thing I want to mention about that event specifically is that we got so much knowledge from our students who now have left Bard and have been probably outside Bard for a while. And one of the things they have always been saying is that I never knew Bard is going to prepare me to face the world this way. When I was going to go to grad school, I would feel smarter than other people because of my Bard education that kind of thing. And that to me is very touching, and not only in the academic sense, but also like Bard helps you fight against the voice that says we don't belong to high education. And Bard helps a lot of with unraveling these stories and piece them apart and maybe get rid of them at some point. And yeah, I just wanted to kind of mention that. In terms of extra support, because we have been talking about it all until this moment. I just wanted to mention that the kind of support that seniors are getting, especially now that we are kind of thinking about it a little bit in the COVID-19, we are kind of having a project that we get to meet with our seniors on a monthly basis. They get to come into a space and typically what they get to talk about is mostly their senior project, which is a requirement of Bard education, is to complete that senior thesis by the time you graduate. And part of what we are doing right now is making sure all of our seniors are understanding a little bit how covid-19 might affect the job market or how Covid-19 might affect a little bit their plans. So, what we are thinking about is that we are just providing all the support that they need from the beginning so that they are preparing all the materials and everything they might need in order to be a competitive candidate for a specific job or the opportunity away from Bard. And the way we are doing that is connecting them with all the resources that are already in place, such as BardWorks, which is something that people, maybe like a hub I would call it, to let juniors and seniors start thinking about the job market and to think about best ways to apply for jobs. And we are connecting them with the career development office, and we are also connecting them with a lot of writing professors who can teach all of our seniors how to write a successful senior project, and how to complete the work despite of the current circumstances and still feel connected to the community while doing so.

**20:23 Josh:** Thanks Wailly. And Kate, I wondered that you mentioned before just some of the other supports that are happening, resources for students, you know, institutionally. I think it might be a nice segue from what Wailly was just mentioning, if you wouldn't mind going back to that, that would be great!

**20:39 Kate:** For sure! Claudette, I don't know if you have anything to add first.

**20:43 Claudette:** I forgot what I was going to say before, but it's ok.

**20:46 Kate:** Okay, I'm sorry. But yeah, Wailly, I love that you wove together so much of the beauty of the equity and inclusion program and the incredible work that you do, with what also unfolds very naturally within the Bard experience in a general sense. I love that you mentioned L&T and that, sort of a first-year experience, is held in common, among all Bard first-year students. And that continues with first year seminar that provides sort of a universal framework for acclimating to what it means to be part of a residential campus community – starting to find you people, starting to find your voice in a seminar-style learning environment, starting to set aside so many of the standardized methods of learning that we've all been indoctrinated with coming to Bard out of the public school system. And I will mention that Bard has been test-optional for over 40 years. For this reason, because the standardized test is a bad way of determining whether you are going to be a good Bard student and that is big part of the equity and inclusion admission process overall – is looking at people holistically and thinking about how somebody is going to step into an experience where they are really invited to be an active participant. And different people come into that experience with different privilege that I think allow them to sort of grasp that experience on

an earlier or later timeline. Wailly spoke so eloquently about the process of learning how to claim those resources and learning how to claim space in an academic community. But I do think the first year program allows for all first year students to be on that journey with a lot held in common and with a framework that is inherently about introducing you to the individual life support that exist at Bard in general – so the collaborative relationship with faculty being on a first-name basis with people that are teaching you, learning how to write an effective academic paper, learning how to engage in civil academic debate, learning how to research effectively with questions and sources, and learning how to engage with the support system. So, introducing you to the learning commons, which is universally available to all students; introducing you to the dean's office, and introducing you to all of the other resources that exist on campus, from the counseling center to the center for civic engagement, to BRAVE, to the Scale project, to Brothers at Bard, and all of these things that are universally accessible to all students. I think that's a big part of the first-year program – having commonalities that it does – and I think that was a really big part of my journey in acclimating to feeling comfortable on campus and in a new academic setting. Claudette, I don't know if you remembered.

**23:52 Claudette:** One of the things I wanted to bring up was the fact that we are pretty diligent about making sure that when students get to campus, they know that they have a foundational support, which is our office, right? But the goal is always to kind of get them to feel comfortable, to get acclimate to campus, and to see Bard as their campus, right? So that's why our students come here when nobody else is here. The campus belongs to them: they can roam around and get really comfortable. But beyond that, what is more important, is to make sure that we are connecting students to the larger community. And that's really it. We want to keep them because we love them. But no, it's really you are here, you can see yourself, you have a build-in support system but now go out and maximize the Bard opportunity. You know Bard is a small campus, a small community, and there is so much to be gained in all aspects. So, maximizing that opportunity, whether is studying abroad or whether is just starting your own TLS project. I mean, there is so much you can do, and our students DO, do that. And we are happy to see that a lot of actions that go on this campus comes from our students. They are pretty active not just on campus but off campus too, a lot of volunteering. There's a huge urgency for social justice among our community and so there's a lot of that. And before I forget, that's what I wanted to say before.

**25:18 Kate:** No, that's super! I've been talking a lot about, sort of the outcomes of Bard experience. Because I think a big thing, we promote is the fact that we are a top-producing institution of Fulbright and Watson fellows, right? Which is incredible, those are incredible opportunities, but they often tend to privilege those that are already privileged. And something I like to highlight about Bard, and this is also a testament to what a lot of your office does is that 2 of our most recent Watsons fellows are also equity and inclusion scholars, which is incredible. And I think it is a testament to the work of, again, helping students at Bard to claim the opportunities that are available. That's something I spend a lot of time talking about just in my general presentations that cycle.

**26:10 Josh:** Thanks so much, Kate! We talked a lot about supports and what the office of equity and inclusion does at Bard. But I'm curious: are there any specific scholarships that are outside the office of equity and inclusion? Are there any specific resources that students can seek when they apply to Bard?

**26:28 Kim:** So, we work with 4 major scholarships on campus. First one being HEOP, it's been at Bard for 51 years now it's called Higher Education Opportunity Program. And it's a scholarship program specifically for students in New York State who meet certain requirements that can be found online. But it supports students who might not normally come to Bard but will thrive at Bard with the resources in the office. After HEOP, many years later, our office helped develop the BOP program, the Bard Opportunity Program, that started in about 2008. It's a bit more flexible than HEOP. So, someone can be eligible for BOP but not be in New York State. But the idea is to support someone who might really benefit from the resources in our office and the financial support for... I'll talk a little bit

of numbers as well: for HEOP, we are funding 36 students at all times, which is on average about 9, or maybe 8 to 12 students per year that can enter the new HEOP class. For BOP, we typically might accept 2 to 4 students per year. The third scholarship I'll mention is POSSE, I was a POSSE scholar myself at Bard. That started at Bard in the year of 2009 and it's a partnership with the national foundation called the POSSE Foundation. And it's a leadership scholarship that focuses on building a team of 10 POSSE students each year to come to Bard. So, the POSSE scholars have our support through our office but they also have the support through their POSSE members and the national foundation of POSSE. Our POSSE scholars right now are coming from Atlanta, Georgia. And lastly, our newest scholarship program is the Early College Opportunity Program. We call it ECO, and that started in 2016 and it's a partnership with the Bard High School Early Colleges. It's a partnership that we try to support students financially who have already started their education in a Bard Early College Institution. And through the ECO scholarship, these students can transfer all of their credits from the Bard High School Early Colleges and they can enter Bard as a junior, they can also enter Bard as a sophomore, if they'd like to spend more time at Bard as well. But they can get the financial support to continue their education of Bard Institution at Bard Annandale. So those are our four scholarships.

**28:54 Josh:** Thanks so much, Kim! Kate, I know you talked about other scholarships before. But I didn't know if there is anything you want to elaborate on.

**29:02 Kate:** I do want to, sort of stemming off of what Kim speaks about the ECHO scholarship. I do want to just give a little voice to the fact that part of what makes Bard distinctive among all other small liberal arts colleges is the fact that we operate as a network of campuses. And Bard exist in different ways in the world largely around this mission of making the liberal arts education as universally accessible as possible. And not just this type of education that exists in the small, elite, gated communities, but exists in the public school system, on an early timeline, completely for free as part of the early colleges network. It exists on our international campuses, largely to serve students in those regions of the world, and not following the old colonial models studying abroad that is by Americans, for Americans, and that is about Americans cannibalizing other cultures. It's really about creating collaborative space for global liberal arts learning that isn't US-centric but is genuinely collaborative. And we offer the largest prison-initiative throughout the country, currently functioning in 6 upstate New York prisons which is part of our responsibility as a campus in upstate New York where there happen to be 6 prisons within our 1-hour campus radius of Annandale-on-Hudson. And it's a way of engaging meaningfully with communities in shifting systems, like the system of mass incarceration. That's why we have two micro campuses that came out of that, Holyoke, Mass and the Brooklyn Public Library. But to a bigger mission to it, I think the college process has just been so much about getting into the most selective institutions possible, and that's a false methodology in a lot of ways. Because part of what you are choosing, you are choosing a social justice is this bigger part of what we do and why we do it. And it is definitely part of what has kept me here. This is my 14<sup>th</sup> year doing admissions work and this is part of why I continue to do the work. But the other part of it is that I get to work with all these incredible humans on this call. Wailly, can I tell you a funny story? When I went into copying you in on to that email, the last email that we exchanged was from 2013 when you were not even yet an applicant to Bard. And yet you have written to me to say that you were very interested, and I said, you know, maybe you should consider applying through the equity and inclusion program which is at that time called BEOP and it just makes me feel so privileged to be a part of this process in the small way that I am. It just makes me reflect on, it brought me back home, the reason that's why so many of us are here. You know there is the bigger picture around the equity and inclusion but so much of it is just about...

**32:10 Wailly:** You want to know about the other part of that story too? I wrote that email because I have found out that one of the students who was graduating that year or the year after I guess, in 2014. She had graduated from my

high school and so my English teacher was like. I have been in the country for a year at that point and he has always been looking at me and he was like, you are a student who is supposed to go to Bard. I don't even know what the school was, but he was like you are supposed to go to this place and I am going to tell you why. And he used to meet with me every Thursday morning for an hour just to talk about why Bard is a good fit and why I should look at other schools like Bard as options if I were to look for colleges and universities in the United States. And so, her name is Lydia and he mentioned her. And I immediately felt like I had to write to somebody at Bard because I was like this is a student and I can't find her anywhere, but I want to talk to her about Bard. I am just going to email somebody and that's why I just ended up emailing you and from there, the director of equity and inclusion office, BEOP, emailed me back saying, hey, your name came across and you should be applying. And that's why we are here now.

**33:44 Josh:** And that's fantastic! And I think a great way to bring our conversation today to a close is that I'd like to thank you all for participating in this very much. If you listeners out there have any questions, feel free to reach out to either of our offices. You can reach out to the office of equity and inclusion at [beop@bard.edu](mailto:beop@bard.edu) and you can reach us [admission@bard.edu](mailto:admission@bard.edu) and certainly stay tuned for more podcasts. And we appreciate you for listening and we look forward to the next time!